United Nations E/2001/73

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 May 2001

Original: English

Substantive session of 2001
Geneva, 2-27 July 2001
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Implementation of agreed conclusions 2000/2 of the coordination segment of the Council on the integrated and coordinated conference follow-up, in particular the views expressed by the functional commissions

Report of the Secretary-General

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* E/2001/100.

01-38461 (E) 190601

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Introduction

1. At its coordination segment of 2000, the Economic and Social Council undertook an assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, based on the report of the Secretary-General at the substantive session of 2000 (E/2000/57), and adopted agreed conclusions 2000/2.[1] Among the recommendations contained in the agreed conclusions, the Council invited its functional commissions to consider a number of options, including those listed in the Secretary-General's report, for ensuring an effective and comprehensive review at the intergovernmental level of major United Nations conferences and summits, and to inform the Council for its consideration at its substantive session in 2001 of the outcome of their discussion (para. 8). The Council invited the commissions to give particular attention to the question of periodicity of conference reviews. In this context, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the different options, including a compilation of the views expressed by the functional commissions (ibid.). The Council further suggested that in reviewing these options, functional commissions should also consider ways and means of ensuring that they have the capacity to conduct their follow-up of conference implementation (para. 9).

2. The present report has been prepared in response to that request. It consists of two parts. the first part reviews follow-up to elements of the agreed conclusions other than paragraphs 8 and 9; the second part addresses the specific issues raised by the Council in paras. 8 and 9 of the agreed conclusions, including, in particular, a compilation of the views expressed by the relevant functional commissions.[2] The report includes a number of recommendations on further steps to strengthen the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences for the Council's consideration.

I. Follow-up to agreed conclusions 2000/2

A. General considerations

3. Following the substantive session of 2000, the President of the Council addressed a letter to the Chairpersons of the functional commissions, drawing their attention to the outcome of that session, and suggesting that efforts be made to follow-up systematically on the policy decisions adopted by the Council. The President invited the Chairpersons to bring these to the attention of the respective commissions, take the necessary action to implement them, and communicate to the Council any specific follow-up action. Agreed conclusions 2000/2 were included among the outcomes brought to the attention of the commission.

4. Given their intent to provide direction to upcoming reviews, implementation of agreed conclusions 2000/2 will require that they be adhered to over time in conjunction with each review process, and that follow-up action not be limited to the one-year time frame since their adoption. The Council's guidance concerning regional or national preparations (para. 12), or early involvement of related intergovernmental bodies and United Nations system entities (paras. 15-16), for example, need to be taken into account at the time a decision on the modalities for a review is being prepared. The same applies with regard to the Council's guidance on a review agenda, scope, outcome and participation (para. 11).

B. Ongoing implementation of conference outcomes

5. As a result of the major conferences and summits of the 1990s, the terms of reference and mandates of functional commissions have in general been strengthened to increase their capacity to support implementation of these outcomes. Some form of comprehensive review of conferences plans or programmes of action is commonly undertaken at five-year intervals. At the same time, functional commissions focus at their annual sessions on progress in the implementation of specific issues covered in these plans and programmes of action, and adopt further guidance thereon to accelerate implementation.[3]

6. United Nations entities contribute to ongoing work of conference implementation at the national and international levels. In response to the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development, for example, United Nations system entities initiated a series of new activities, thus immediately following up on the findings and new initiatives that emanated from the review.[4] In follow-up to the five-year review of the Beijing conference, a new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women was prepared, covering the years 2002-2005 and outlining individual actions of the organizations of the United Nations system acting in concert and with a coherent, coordinated strategy (E/CN.6/2001/4).

7. Follow-up to global conferences by United Nations country teams in support of conference implementation at national level has become more coordinated and integrated than in the past. Good practices can be found in theme group activities, such as joint analysis and assessment of a country's progress in achieving conference goals; thematic assessment as a basis for policy dialogue with the Government and other national partners; and area-based integrated/joint programmes on cross-cutting issues such as poverty eradication.[5]

C. The transition from implementation of a conference outcome to review and appraisal of progress made in its implementation

8. The increase of global conference and summit activities in the economic, social and related fields in the 1990s has created new challenges for Governments and entities of the United Nations system for the optimal management of the follow-up processes at the national, regional and global levels.[6] Since primary responsibility for implementing conference and summit outcomes rests in all instances with Governments, they have put in place national strategies for implementation for a number, or all, of them.

9. The comprehensive and far-reaching nature and scope of many of the plans, programmes and platforms for action adopted at these events, and now increasingly, also of the outcome documents of their "+5 reviews", are indicative of the equally complex and time-consuming nature of their implementation process. This complexity suggests that they will need to be implemented over a longer period of time. Copenhagen +5, for example, acknowledges an inevitable lag between the initiation of policies and measurable results, and notes that a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of new policies and programmes takes time.[7] The special session of the General Assembly devoted to the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and related activities identified the years 2003 and 2008 for meeting specific goals and targets for enhancing the cooperative effort to combat the world drug problem (see General Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex). At the same time, the General Assembly called on all States to report biennially to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on their efforts to meet these goals and targets. The Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) identifies a range of demographic and social goals to be achieved over a 20-year period.

10. The transition from the implementation mode of a particular conference and its "+5 review" outcome to the review and appraisal mode is evident in the work of the functional commissions and United Nations system entities. While the general principle for a comprehensive review might be established well in advance, for example in multi-year work programmes of functional commissions or in a conference document itself, the actual modalities for such a review are more commonly determined at a much later stage. The full transition from one stage to another thus often occurs within less than a year of a review event, as is indicated in multi-year work programmes of commissions. For example, both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development were expected to initiate the comprehensive reviews, in addition to considering particular topics, in 1999, but actually to conduct the reviews in 2000 only. The Commission on Population and Development was expected to undertake the quinquennial review and appraisal of ICPD in 1999 only, in addition to deliberating on a particular topic. Similarly, the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development consisted until its ninth session in 2001 of follow-up to Agenda 21 and of the outcome of the 1997 review, with only the tenth session being dedicated to an overall review of the Rio Conference and Rio+5.

11. On the other hand, the transition from follow-up to an event and its implementation to a 5- (or 10-) year review and appraisal at the national level usually needs to occur much earlier. Governments are invited to start national preparations for the reviews substantially earlier than the scheduled date of the review in the intergovernmental machinery. The deadlines contained in requests for national reports or information that form the basis for regional and global progress reports on implementation are an indication of the start of national-level reviews. For example, the five-year review for Beijing took place in June 2000. A questionnaire inviting Governments to provide information was sent out in October 1998. The deadline given for replies was 30 April 1999. The questionnaire for Rio+10 was sent to all Governments in August 2000, and the suggested deadline for responses was 1 March 2001. The Summit will take place in September 2002.

12. In the light of the time lag between the conclusion of a conference and/or its five-year review and the preparation of national follow-up strategies, the actual time period between the initiation of a structured implementation process and the beginning of its review can therefore be noticeably less than five years. This raises the question as to the extent to which progress in, or completion of, implementation of the comprehensive conference plans and programmes and their five-year review documents can be expected at the time of the next five-year review. Consequently, consideration should be given to whether the focus of a subsequent 5- (or 10-) year review should mainly be on assessing progress made in an effort to accelerate implementation of existing commitments rather than on negotiating new and additional actions and initiatives.

13. In a parallel manner, entities of the United Nations system contribute to conference implementation at the national, regional and international levels following a conference or five-year review, while refocusing their efforts to assessing progress in implementation once the modalities for a comprehensive review have been determined. (See report of the Secretary-General at the session of 2000, E/2000/57, paras. 20-24.)

D. Ongoing reviews

14. Currently, two review processes guided by functional commissions are under way. Preparations for Habitat II+5 are nearing completion, and the special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review will have taken place (6-8 June 2001) by the time of the Council's substantive session of 2001. The World Summit for Sustainable Development, which includes a review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, is in full preparation. Preparation for the special session of the General Assembly on children is being undertaken by a preparatory committee of the General Assembly set up specifically for this purpose.

E. The role of the Council in implementing agreed conclusions 2000/2

15. Follow-up to and implementation of agreed conclusions 2000/2 will require an ongoing commitment on the part of the Council, its functional commissions, and the entities of the United Nations system to adhere to the guidance provided. The Council's monitoring of the implementation of the various elements of these agreed conclusions should therefore regularly be built into reporting under the item on "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits".

16. The Council committed itself to a series of steps to maintain focus on integrated follow-up to conferences. While a number of these steps are part of its ongoing work, others will require further concrete action by the Council. These elements are reviewed below.

17. "The Council will pursue its role in addressing cross-cutting themes common to major United Nations conferences and summits" (agreed conclusions 2000/2, para. 10). The Council implements this element primarily through its coordination segment and is expected to continue to do so in future. The Council has determined that each year, within the framework of its coordination segment, it will carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference (agreed conclusions 1995/1).[8] In addition, the Council often selects a second theme dealing with a concrete sectoral issue.

18. Of the seven themes dealt with since 1996, three addressed implementation of a particular conference (human rights in 1998, Habitat II in 2000, and gender mainstreaming in follow-up to Beijing in 1997) and one dealt with progress in integrated and coordinated conference follow-up (2000); one dealt with a cross-cutting theme common to major conferences (poverty eradication in 1996); and one segment focused on the development of Africa (1999). The theme chosen for the 2001 session (The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector) is also of a cross-sectoral character.

19. "The Council will continue to promote an integrated and coordinated conference follow-up" (agreed conclusions 2000/2, para. 10). Implementation of this element should be pursued primarily under item 6 of the Council's agenda, under which the Council has in the past provided guidance with regard to various aspects of conference follow-up (see Council resolutions 1998/44, 1999/55). To the extent that the Council has also provided guidance concerning conference follow-up in its work in conjunction with its consideration of further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (item 8 of the Council's agenda), mainly on the basis of a consolidated report on the outcomes of the functional commissions, consideration could be given to combining all aspects relevant to conference follow-up under one item.

20. "In particular, it will follow up progress towards quantified goals and targets agreed at the conferences" (agreed conclusions, para. 10), thus confirming the role of quantified goals and targets in implementing conference outcomes in an integrated manner. Such goals and targets are contained, to varying degrees, in the outcomes of the major conferences and summits, as well as in their five-year reviews. Examples of such quantified goals and targets were presented in a table at the Council's last session, in its coordination segment (E/2000/57, annex III).

21. The importance of quantified targets and goals was underlined in the Millennium Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/2, in paragraph 19 of which heads of State and Government resolved to achieve a number of quantitative goals and targets in the economic, social and related fields.[9]

22. The focus in the Millennium Declaration on these quantified goals and targets highlights the urgency to chart a course, at the national and international levels, for their achievement, and for their regular monitoring to reach them by the indicated dates. The conferences of the 1990s, and their integrated and coordinated implementation constitute a detailed basis for action in that direction. The functional commissions having primary responsibility for follow-up to a particular conference should support this effort, including by focusing on progress towards the quantified goals and targets that are specific to their area of responsibility. The results of the International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled to take place in March 2002, may be expected to contribute action points for comprehensive global and national strategies to achieve the Millennium goals and targets.

23. The Council's ongoing work on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences at all levels constitutes an additional component of the follow-up to the quantified goals and targets agreed at conferences (see, for example, E/1999/11, and Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27). The Statistical Commission has accepted the invitation by the Council to serve as intergovernmental focal point for the review of conference indicators and considered this work as a welcome opportunity to contribute its technical expertise to the ongoing debate on indicators. It is expected to propose, in 2002, a limited number of common indicators.[10]

F. Recommendations

24. The Council, through its coordination and oversight responsibilities in the economic, social and related fields, is uniquely placed to undertake the comprehensive assessment of progress made in achieving the socio-economic goals and targets set in the Millennium Declaration, and thereby assist the General Assembly in its overall responsibilities, as set out in General Assembly resolution 55/162 of 14 December 2000, on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. Regular assessments should include progress in implementation of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s and their quinquennial reviews, as well as progress in implementation of the outcome of the International

Conference on Financing for Development in support of the achievement of the Millennium goals and targets of the conferences and summits. The Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions could specify their role in monitoring these goals, and in providing to the General Assembly advice on obstacles, constraints and new challenges that affect progress towards achieving the quantified goals and targets.

II. Ensuring an effective and comprehensive review at the intergovernmental level of major United Nations conferences and summits

25. The conferences of the 1990s are characterized by their interlinkages and a recognition of the mutually reinforcing nature of many of the core issues each of them addressed. They explicitly consider linkages between various sectors, and recognize issues or subjects as means towards certain ends, as well as ends in themselves. They reflect the international community's consensus on the integrated and holistic nature of economic and social progress and development.

26. Regular reviews are considered critical in ensuring progress towards realizing agreed goals.[11] As the five-year reviews of the conferences of the 1990s have now been completed, the challenge for the intergovernmental level is to achieve a balance between continuing implementation and follow-up, undertaken primarily by functional commissions as part of their regular work programmes on the one hand, and periodic reviews through designated intergovernmental preparatory processes that culminate in comprehensive assessments of progress made, identification of new and emerging challenges and new, or further actions and initiatives in a given area.

A. Options for improving conference follow-up at the intergovernmental level

27. In paragraph 33 of his report to the Council at its coordination segment of 2000 (E/2000/57), the Secretary-General presented a number of options for improving conference follow-up at the intergovernmental level with a view to achieving a more effective and harmonized approach.[12] In paragraphs 8 and 9 of agreed conclusions 2000/2, the Council invited the functional commissions to consider such options and to inform the Council in 2001 of the outcome of their discussion (see para. 1 above).

28. In addition to the President's letter to the Chairpersons of the functional commissions, the secretariats of the commissions provided support to them in their follow-up to the Council's invitation, including through briefings of the bureaux (see, for example, E/CN.9/2001/CRP.1, report of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development on its inter-sessional meeting, held at Nairobi on 27 and 28 September 2000; letter by the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights to the President of the Council), or documentation (see, for example, E/CN.6/2001/10, Commission on the Status of Women, note by the Secretariat).

B. Views expressed by functional commissions

1. Commission on Human Settlements

29. The Commission met from 12 to 16 February 2001. While the Commission has a regular item on matters arising out of resolutions of major legislative organs of the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies which are brought to the attention of the Commission, no action in response to the Council's request in agreed conclusions 2000/2 was taken by the Commission under this item, and no views were provided on the question addressed to it by the Council in paragraph 8 of the agreed conclusions.

2. Commission for Social Development

30. The Commission met from 13 to 23 February 2001. The Commission's Vice-Chairperson, in a letter of 18 December 2000, drew the attention of the President of the Council to the request of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to the Council "to assess regularly, through the Commission for Social Development, the further implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the outcome of the special session, not excluding the possibility of bringing together, at an appropriate time, all parties involved to evaluate progress and to consider new initiatives" (General Assembly resolution S-24/2). In

its proposal to the Commission for a multi-year work programme for 2002-2006, the Bureau highlighted specific mandates for further action by the Council and the Commission (E/CN.5/2001/L.3, para. 6). Among other things, the Bureau proposed that in 2005, five years after the special session, the Commission undertake a comprehensive review and make proposals for further action in order to implement the recommendation of the General Assembly at its special session.

31. In its proposals for a multi-year programme of work, submitted to the Council for approval at its 2001 session, the Commission identifies "Review of further implementation of the Social Summit and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly" as the priority theme for 2005, "subject to decision of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2001".

32. The Commission did not follow up on the Council's suggestion that functional commissions should also consider ways and means of ensuring that they have the capacity to conduct their follow-up of conference implementation.

3. Commission on the Status of Women

33. The Commission met from 6 to 16 March and from 9 to 11 May 2001. It has a standing item on follow-up to Council resolutions and decisions. In the documentation prepared for this item, reference was made to Council agreed conclusions 2000/2 and in particular paragraph 8 (see E/CN.6/2001/10). The letter from the President of the Council to the Chairperson of the Commission was also circulated (E/CN.6/2001/11). The Commission adopted a decision (E/CN.6/2001/L.9) requesting that, in view of paragraph 9 of the political declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session (resolution S/23/2, annex), a decision for enhancing the review of the progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly should be taken in coordination with the conference reviews of other functional commissions.

34. The Commission discussed its new multi-year programme of work, as well as its methods of work. In its proposals for a multi-year programme of work, submitted to the Council for approval at its 2001 session, the Commission identifies "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly" as the priority theme for 2005, "subject to decision of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2001". In addition, the Commission also proposes to consider in 2005 "current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls" (E/CN.6/2001/L.8). The Commission decided to discuss further its working methods at its forty-sixth session.

4. Commission on Human Rights

35. The Commission met from 19 March to 27 April 2001 (fifty-seventh session). In a letter to the Council President dated 9 March 2001, the Chairperson of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission noted that the Bureau had included a special item on the follow-up to the Economic and Social Council recommendations in its agenda during the inter-sessional period, including coordination between the functional commissions, global conference follow-up, and the role of the Bureau. The Chairperson expressed his intention to bring this issue to the attention of the fifty-seventh Bureau so that the Commission might further consider the issue and undertake specific action in accordance with the guidelines and directives set out by the Council. The work of the Bureau was facilitated by a background note by the Secretariat summarizing the main suggestions and recommendations relevant to the work of the Commission. The Bureau of the fifty-seventh session decided to remain seized of the matter, and also to afford the regional groups a time of reflection, requesting them to revert with concrete proposals or recommendations in the future.

5. Commission on Population and Development

36. The Commission met from 2 to 6 April 2001. In preparation for its sessions, the Bureau of the Commission holds inter-sessional meetings on a yearly basis. At its inter-sessional meeting in preparation for the thirty-fourth session (27 and 28 September 2000), the attention of the Bureau was specifically drawn to the Council's invitation to the relevant functional commissions concerning conference reviews.

37. The Bureau reviewed the options listed in paragraph 33 of the report of the Secretary-General (E/2000/57) for the review at the intergovernmental

level of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Bureau believed that the Commission on Population and Development should have the primary responsibility for quinquennial reviews and appraisals of the progress made in achieving the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action. Special sessions of the General Assembly or conferences should take place only for 10-year reviews.

38. The Bureau also believed that it would be useful to have a 10-year review in 2004 that would focus on key population issues that are of major concern to all countries. The Bureau, also taking into account the activities already planned by other agencies and bodies of the United Nations system in the field of population and development, proposed that an international event be convened in 2004 and that the title of the event might be: "Population and development challenges for the twenty-first century: population structure, population distribution and migration".

39. While the Commission discussed the question of the next review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD scheduled for 2004, it provided no views on the question addressed to it by the Council in paragraph 8 of the agreed conclusions.

6. Commission on Sustainable Development

40. The ninth session of the Commission was held from 16 to 27 April 2001. From 30 April to 2 May, the organizational session of the Commission's tenth session was convened, serving as preparatory committee for the 10-year review and assessment of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and of other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/199 of 20 December 2000, decided to organize the review at the summit level, to be held in 2002 in Johannesburg, and to be called the "World Summit on Sustainable Development". The proposed dates for the Summit are 2 to 11 September 2002. Following its first preparatory meeting in April/May, three additional preparatory meetings will be held, with the last one to take place at the ministerial level in May 2002 in Indonesia.

7. In summation

41. Given the schedule of past conferences and decisions already taken by the General Assembly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development will include a 10-year review of UNCED. No decision about a possible 10-year follow-up beyond regular review at the Commission level and in the General Assembly has been taken with regard to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs is already mandated to undertake a review of efforts to meet the goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008 agreed upon in the political declaration of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in 1998. The Commission on Population and Development is expected to undertake a regular quinquennial review in 2004. Both the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women propose to undertake a review of the implementation of their conferences and of their five-year review outcomes in 2005, subject to a decision of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2001. The five-year review of Habitat II is being undertaken in June 2001.

8. Recommendation

42. In the light of the lack of a clear expression of preferences among the options on the part of the functional commissions, the Secretary-General reiterates the options presented to the Council in 2000 for its consideration and action (see E/2000/57, para. 33. For the text, see note 12).

C. The purpose of conference reviews and the role of the Council

43. To provide additional input to the Council in its deliberations on further rationalizing and streamlining the conference review processes, possible ways for strengthening the role of the existing intergovernmental machinery, and in particular that of the Council, in coordinated and integrated conference follow-up are presented in this section. The suggestions focus on a strengthened role of the Council as a possible substitute for special sessions to review and appraise progress in the implementation of the conferences and summits of the 1990s. Opportunities for integrating follow-up to the Millennium Declaration's socio-economic goals and targets, the International

Conference on Financing for Development, and the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (14 to 20 May 2001) should be pursued as well.

1. Purpose of conference reviews

44. The most basic purpose of regular review exercises is to accelerate implementation of conference outcomes. More specifically, this includes a need to assess, within a certain time frame, progress made towards the goals and commitments contained in the outcome documents, to identify lessons learned and challenges encountered, as well as to identify new issues that need to be tackled within a given sector. These reviews are usually of a comprehensive nature and cover the entire outcome document of a particular event, building on the work done (annually) by commissions on selected themes. At the same time, the reviews go beyond the regular work of the commissions and assess the entire range of issues covered in a conference, thus providing opportunities to focus on the links and interdependencies among them, how these issues need to be refocused in the light of new trends and developments in society, and identify further actions and initiatives in a given sector.

45. Comprehensive reviews covering 5- or 10-year time frames provide an important occasion for stocktaking. Building on annual progress assessments in particular areas, comprehensive reviews are usually events that bring together larger and more diverse numbers of stakeholders than is the case at a commission's annual session, and provide the backdrop for increasing/recharging the momentum and visibility for particular issues in a global and national environment where many legitimate concerns are competing for attention.

46. Given the general consensus that the global conferences of the 1990s, taken together, make up the constituent elements of a comprehensive, holistic and interdependent vision of socio-economic development, conference reviews are also the occasion for "reassembling" this holistic vision, based on the sectoral work done in the individual processes. The challenge remains to devise effective means for achieving accelerated implementation of individual conferences and their follow-up on the one hand, and on the other, to provide occasions and forums where several sectoral issues as well as cross-cutting issues can be addressed in a holistic manner. Consideration should be given regarding how the existing three-tiered intergovernmental structure for conference follow-up could be strengthened and better utilized towards both these ends.

47. At a time when the +5 reviews have been completed, the issue which the Council may wish to address at the current session is the format and related modalities which the 10-year review cycle of the conferences of the 1990s could take. This could be done either through a Council decision on the principles that should guide all the reviews, or by dealing with the reviews on a case-by-case basis. In doing so, the Council may wish to take into account the options proposed by the Secretary-General in 2000, the views expressed by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development, both of which propose to undertake reviews as part of their regular work programme in 2005, as well as the fact that the five-year reviews resulted in comprehensive outcome documents. These negotiated outcomes consist in general of either all, or some of the following elements: a political declaration or statement of commitment, assessments of achievements, obstacles and current challenges, and further actions and initiatives[13] to implement the commitments of the respective conference.

48. It should be noted that, once a decision is taken to convene a 5- or 10-year review as a special session of the General Assembly or at the summit level, preparations (usually) become the responsibility of the functional commissions acting as preparatory committees, or of a preparatory committee established for that purpose (Social Summit), with a limited role for the Council. The conference reviews are commonly undertaken within a given area (sustainable development, human settlements, gender equality, children, social development, population issues), with limited room or occasion for an integrative approach across various sectors or conferences. It is thus suggested that the Council could, in future, take on a greater role in the 10-year reviews with the focus predominantly on an integrated or multisectoral approach to assessing progress made in implementation, building on its past guidance on integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences.

49. Furthermore, as a strategic forum that provides overall guidance and coordination to the United Nations development system, and promotes integrated follow-up to the major United Nations Conferences in

the economic, social and related fields, the Council is uniquely placed to integrate follow-up to global conferences with the follow-up to, and implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development.

2. Strengthening the links between functional commissions and the Council in conference follow-up

50. Several functional commissions recognize explicitly in their annual agenda, through a separate item, that new trends and emerging issues affecting the overall goals within their mandate and which could not be foreseen at the time of the holding of a conference or its five-year review may require attention. There does, however, appear to be space for a broader and more innovative use of this item to enrich the work of functional commissions[14] and subsequently, that of the Council. Commissions could use this item to elaborate input to the Council's high-level and/or coordination segment, especially when the topics of the segments are directly related to conference follow-up.

51. While the reports of functional commissions and thus the output of their work on follow-up to conferences within their purview is reported annually to the Council, Commissions have so far rarely proposed particular issues, including those arising from implementation of conference outcomes, for consideration by the Council.[15] Commissions do not explicitly bring to the Council's attention questions that, from their particular perspective, would benefit from consideration from a broader socio-economic (multidisciplinary), or cross-cutting perspective, in the Council.[16]

52. At a time when the five-year reviews of all the major conferences of the 1990s have been completed,[17] the Council could intensify its consideration of common themes and assess progress made in implementation from a multidisciplinary perspective. As indicated in paragraph 18 above, the Council has, in its coordination segments since 1996, taken up one substantive cross-cutting issue that is prominently represented in all conferences, namely poverty eradication. The focus of the 1996 segment, as well as of the conference-specific themes (human rights, human settlements) emphasized coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, rather than coordination of policy approaches among the various commissions on cross-cutting issues. Similarly, the Council's special dialogue of 1998 (13-15 May 1998, see E/1998/19) and its 2000 coordination segment addressed issues of coordination in Conference follow-up, providing guidance to the United Nations system and the Council's subsidiary machinery, rather than policy issues arising from the substantive areas covered by the conferences.

53. Taking into account the proposed comprehensive reviews to be undertaken by some of the commissions (Commission on Population and Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission for Social Development) at the 10-year mark, the Council could consider developing its own forward-looking multi-year programme of work for its coordination segment to reinforce, from a multisectoral approach, the commissions' work in conference follow-up. The Council could use such multisectoral reviews to highlight on the one hand the substantive expertise that is unique to the functional commissions, but on the other hand, to strengthen/reinforce that substantive expertise by anchoring and integrating it in the larger socio-economic policy framework that falls within the Council's coordination and oversight responsibility. In developing such a programme of work, the 10-year review dates could provide guidance in choosing the particular focus for each year.

54. Ten-year multisectoral reviews by the Council would thus strengthen the substantive links between commissions having primary responsibility for follow-up and implementation of a particular conference, and the Council in supporting coordinated and integrated follow-up to major conferences and summits, especially in terms of policy coherence among these processes. They would also take full advantage of the existing three-tiered intergovernmental structure in conference follow-up. Ten-year reviews could thus combine substantive comprehensive reviews of a particular conference undertaken by a commission, with a cross-cutting review by the Council that "reassembles" the holistic approach to socio-economic development. Built around the core issues of a specific conference and its +5 review results, such a Council review could usefully bring together related elements from other conferences that have an impact on full implementation. Poverty eradication, and the realization of the socio-economic goals and targets

contained in the Millennium Declaration should serve as the overall framework for such an approach.

55. For example, the Council could reinforce, in 2003, the work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in reviewing implementation of the 1998 special session of the General Assembly on a drug-free world by discussing policy coherence between drug control and related issues such as protection of human rights, health issues, social cohesion, and transnational organized crime. When the Commission on Population and Development undertakes a quinquennial review in 2004, the Council's contribution to the 10-year review of ICPD could consist of a discussion of policy coherence between population trends and related issues such as sustainable development, gender equality, social cohesion, employment, and shelter. If the Commission on Human Rights decides to undertake a 10-year review of the World Conference on Human Rights in 2003, the Council could deepen such a substantive assessment by discussing policy coherence between the promotion and protection of human rights and related issues such as the situation of certain groups (for example youth, the disabled), housing and shelter, gender equality, and crime prevention and criminal justice.

56. During its coordination segment, the Council could also serve as convenor for joint consideration of two or more areas in order to facilitate a multisectoral perspective at the 10-year review date. This could be an option for 2005, following the substantive reviews by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development. Given the multifaceted nature of both Beijing and Copenhagen, and their +5 outcome documents, elements covered as core issues by other functional commissions should also be brought in, such as human settlements, the protection and promotion of human rights, and population issues.

57. The outcome of the Council's multisectoral review of conferences at their respective 10-year mark could be modelled on current practice in its high-level and coordination segments and take the form of a ministerial declaration, ministerial communiqué, or agreed conclusions, focusing on policy coherence and coordination aspects. A Chairperson's summary of activities organized in conjunction with such a review (round tables, panel discussions, briefings, dialogues among various groups of stakeholders) could constitute an easily accessible record of such events, and complement the official outcome.

3. The role of the General Assembly

58. In the three-tiered intergovernmental structure for follow-up to conferences, the General Assembly constitutes the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of policy on matters relating to the follow-up to conferences. It also decides whether review events of the implementation of conference plans or programmes of action should be convened as a special session, and on the modalities of such special sessions. It also decides on new conferences or summits to be convened in the economic, social and related fields.

59. To the extent that the Council could take on a stronger role in promoting coherence and coordination in periodic conference reviews, the Assembly would have the opportunity to focus on overall policy issues and consider new and emerging issues and trends that might require in-depth attention. Links could also be established between ongoing conference follow-up that includes the functional commissions, and other recent or upcoming events/special sessions that have not involved the Council and its subsidiary machinery. In this regard, integrating the follow-up to events, such as the special session on HIV/AIDS, or the conference on financing for development, into existing intergovernmental structures, especially into the Council's regular work, should be envisaged.[18]

4. Involvement of all stakeholders

60. Representatives of non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, such as major groups, local authorities, and other actors of civil society, are recognized as critical partners in the implementation of conferences. In addition to their work at the local and national levels, they participate in the annual sessions of functional commissions. This participation contributes to the continuity between the work of intergovernmental mechanisms and their responsibilities for conference follow-up, and the local and national level, where Governments assume primary responsibility for implementation, with the active participation and contribution of civil society.

61. Global conferences, as well as the comprehensive reviews at the 5-year mark by the General Assembly at special sessions, have not only been catalytic events for

mobilizing political will and commitment in support of a particular agenda in the economic, social or related fields, but have also provided the anchor for galvanizing the involvement of civil society. When the Council considers options for the 10-year reviews, consideration should be given to ensuring opportunities for participation of all relevant stakeholders in maintaining and strengthening the momentum for implementation, and for building partnerships in pursuit of conference goals.

5. Recommendations

62. The following recommendations, contained in part II above, are summarized for ease of reference:

(a) In discussing periodic conference review processes, the Council may wish to take into consideration the options proposed by the Secretary-General in 2000 (para. 42);

(b) The Council could, in future, take on a greater role in the 10-year reviews with the focus predominantly on an integrated or multi-sectoral approach to assessing progress made in implementation, building on its past guidance on integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences (para. 48);

(c) As a strategic forum that provides overall guidance and coordination to the United Nations development system, and promotes integrated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields, the Council is uniquely placed to integrate follow-up to global conferences with the follow-up to, and implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development (para. 49);

(d) Commissions could use the item on new trends and emerging issues to elaborate input to the Council's high-level and/or coordination segment, especially when these topics are directly related to conference follow-up (para. 50);

(e) Taking into account the proposed comprehensive reviews to be undertaken by some of the commissions at the 10-year mark, the Council could consider developing its own forward-looking multi-year programme of work for its coordination segment to reinforce, from a multisectoral approach, the commissions' work in conference follow-up. The 10-year review dates could provide guidance in choosing the particular focus for each year (para. 53);

(f) To the extent that the Council could take on a stronger role in promoting coherence and coordination in periodic conference reviews, the Assembly would have the opportunity to focus on overall policy issues and consider new and emerging issues and trends that might require in-depth attention (para. 59);

(g) Integrating the follow-up to events, such as the special session on HIV/AIDS, or the conference on financing for development, into existing intergovernmental structures, especially into the Council's regular work, should be envisaged (para. 59);

(h) When the Council considers options for the 10-year reviews, consideration should be given to ensuring opportunities for participation of all relevant stakeholders in maintaining and strengthening the momentum for implementation, and for building partnerships in pursuit of conference goals (para. 61).

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/55/3), chap. V.

[2] The functional commissions entrusted with the follow-up to major United Nations conferences are the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development, and the Commission on Human Settlements, the latter being a Standing Committee of the Council.

[3] It should be noted that, except for the Commission on Sustainable Development, mandates and terms of reference of commissions include responsibilities that go beyond those for conference follow-up.

[4] These initiatives were compiled by the Secretariat and submitted in an information note to the Commission for Social Development in 2001.

[5] Synthesis report of the resident coordinator annual reports, 1999.

[6] A list of conferences and summits is contained in the annex to the present report.

[7] This point was specifically stressed in the Copenhagen+5 review, review and assessment, para. 8 (see General Assembly resolution S-24/2, annex).

[8] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/50/3).

[9] These are:

- To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and

the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water.

- To ensure that, by the same date [2015], children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.
- By the same date [2015], to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates.
- To have, by then [2015], halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases that afflict humanity.
- To provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.
- By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the "Cities without Slums" initiative.

[10] The Statistical Commission, at its thirty-second session, agreed to form a "friends of the Chair advisory group" to technically validate the conference indicators, to elaborate recommendations for a limited list of indicators and to make proposals for a mechanism of statistical review of future indicators. It expressed its doubts, however, that a single limited set of indicators could satisfy the various national, regional and specialized sectoral needs and emphasized the need for flexibility.

[11] A list of upcoming reviews and conferences, including existing mandates, is contained in the annex to the present report.

[12] These options were:

"(a) One option might be to hold a single '10-year event' to review the conferences in a sequential manner, be it an international conference or a special session of the General Assembly. Such a single event would be the culmination of a preparatory process encompassing the functional commissions and other relevant intergovernmental bodies, which would address core issues, as well as the Economic and Social Council, which would focus on cross-cutting issues;

"(b) A second option might be to cluster the review of the implementation of several programmes of action found to be closely related at a special session of the General Assembly or other event. For example, the reviews of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States could be carried out together. Similarly, the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women could be reviewed together in a separate cluster;

"(c) A third option might be to stagger the follow-up processes so that there would be only one conference review in any given year. In this regard, the occurrence, for instance, in the same year of the 10-year reviews of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women would be avoided;

"(d) As a fourth option, 5-year conference reviews and appraisals could in the future be carried out by the functional commissions themselves, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly while special sessions of the Assembly or conferences would take place only for 10-year reviews. Indeed, it may be noted that the practice of holding special sessions of the General Assembly to review the implementation of conferences after five years is fairly recent."

[13] The exception is the World Conference on Human Rights: its five-year review resulted in a set of comprehensive agreed conclusions emanating from the Council's coordination segment, and a (short) resolution adopted in the General Assembly. The outcome of Habitat II+5 is not known at this point.

[14] Between 1996 and 2000, the Commission on the Status of Women used this item once, in 1998, to address the status of older women, and prepared a contribution to the International Year of Older Persons. The Commission for Social Development, which also has a standing item on emerging issues, trends and new approaches, had already identified relevant topics in 1996 for 1997 and 1998, but did not further utilize it in 1999 or 2000 (see Council resolution 1996/7).

[15] In 1995, the Commission on Human Rights proposed that the Council dedicate a high-level segment to evaluating the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development within the United Nations system. In 2001, the Commission on the Status of Women proposed that the Council devote a future coordination segment, by 2005, to the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. See the Secretary-General's report on the themes for 2002, E/2001/53.

[16] The Council has in the past encouraged the functional commissions to identify more clearly actions that require a coordinated United Nations system-wide response (resolution 1999/55).

[17] Habitat II+5 will take place in June 2001; a five-year review of the World Food Summit will take place in November, within the purview of FAO.

[18] In his report on proposed themes for the high-level and coordination segments of the substantive session of 2002 of the Council, the Secretary-General proposes follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development for consideration in the coordination segment.

Annex

A. Major United Nations Conferences and Summits of the 1990s

- World Summit for Children (UNICEF, New York, 1990)
- International Conference on Nutrition (FAO, Rome, 1992)
- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (United Nations, Rio de Janeiro, 1992)
- World Conference on Human Rights (United Nations, Vienna, 1993)
- International Conference on Population and Development (United Nations/UNFPA, Cairo, 1994)
- Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (United Nations, Bridgetown, 1994)
- Fourth World Conference on Women (United Nations, Beijing, 1995)
- World Summit for Social Development (United Nations, Copenhagen, 1995)
- United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (United Nations, Istanbul, 1996)
- World Food Summit (FAO, Rome, 1996)
- Twentieth special session of the General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem together (United Nations, New York, 1998)
- World Education Forum (UNESCO, Dakar, 2000)

B. Selected list of upcoming conferences in the economic, social and related fields, including mandates for future reviews, as applicable

2001	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*
LDC III, 14-20 May, Brussels Habitat II+5 6-8 June, General Assembly special session HIV/AIDS 25-27 June, General Assembly special session, New York World Conference against racism, 31 August-7 September, South Africa Special session on children, 19-21 September, New York "World Food Summit: five years after". FAO Special Meeting to review progress achieved towards the goals of the 1996 World Food Summit (November)	International Conference on Financing for Development (second half of March) Second World Assembly on Ageing, 8-12 April, Madrid World Summit for Sustainable Development (Rio+10), 2-11 September, Johannesburg	World Summit on the Information Society (ITU) 10 years after the World Conference on Human Rights (no mandate for specific event) Five years after the General Assembly special session on countering the world drug problem (regular reporting to and follow-up by Commission on Narcotic Drugs, with targets in 2003 and 2008)	10 years after Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. General Assembly special session in 1999, to review Barbados programme of action (mandate for 2004 review in para. 47 of 1999 General Assembly special session), General Assembly resolution S-22/2 UNCTAD XI 10 years after ICPD (no mandate for specific event)	10 years after Beijing. General Assembly special session in 2000, with mandate for 2005 in resolution S-23/2, annex, para. 9. 10 years after Copenhagen. General Assembly special session in 2000 with no specific further mandate — "at an appropriate time" (resolution S-24/2, annex, para. 156). Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders (draft resolution 1, report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its tenth session).	World Food Summit mid-term review by FAO Committee on World Food Security — in the context of a special forum of the regular session of the Committee on World Food Security (Plan of Action, para. 60 (h))